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26 June 1991

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

COMMITTEE ON CONFERENCES
Substantive session
19-23 August 1991
Agenda item 2 (e)

CALENDAR OF CONFERENCES AND MEETINGS: PROCEDURES WITH REGARD TO INTER-SESSIONAL DEPARTURES FROM THE APPROVED CALENDAR OF CONFERENCES AND MEETINGS

Note by the Secretariat

INTRODUCTION

1. In paragraph 2 of its resolution 45/238 A of 21 December 1990, the General Assembly requested the Committee on Conferences to review, within its mandate, the existing procedures with regard to inter-sessional departures from the approved calendar of conferences and meetings and to report to the Assembly at its forty-sixth session.

2. At its 326th meeting, on 6 March 1991, the Committee requested the Secretariat to provide it with a written report on the matter for consideration at its 1991 substantive session. The present paper is presented in response to that request.

I. LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY OF THE COMMITTEE WITH REGARD TO INTER-SESSIONAL DEPARTURES

3. In paragraph 4 (c) of its resolution 43/222 B of 21 December 1988, the General Assembly decided that the Committee should act on behalf of the Assembly with respect to proposed departures from the approved calendar of conferences that had administrative and financial implications, in conformity with the budgetary process in force and with full respect for the mandates of other bodies.

4. The authority for the Committee to consider inter-sessional departures for subsidiaries of the Economic and Social Council dates from 1979, when the Chairman of the Committee and the President of the Council instituted a "gentlemen's agreement", by which departures that were requested by subsidiaries of the Council in periods when the Council was not in session should be referred by the Bureau of the Council to the Committee for decision. Departures occurring in periods when the Council was in session would continue to be decided upon by the Council and, subsequently, brought to the attention of the Committee.

5. An inter-sessional departure is a change to the approved calendar of conferences after adoption by the General Assembly, in one or more of the following ways:

(a) Departures involving a change in date of an already scheduled session at the same venue;

(b) Departures calling for a change in the venue of a scheduled session;

(c) Departures involving supplementary requirements, such as an addition of meetings and sessions not scheduled, an extension of duration and/or number of meetings of sessions already scheduled and an increase in the level of services to be provided to meetings already scheduled.

6. Administrative implications of inter-sessional departures are changes to the calendar that involve the granting of an exception to existing rule(s) or regulation(s) of the General Assembly, or matters of policy that entail significant administrative changes in the calendar of conferences.

7. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 43/222 B, the Committee is mandated to review inter-sessional departures with administrative and/or financial implications. In that context, a financial implication is a request that would entail additional costs or additional expenditures. Currently, statements of programme budget implications have replaced the earlier statements of administrative and financial implications. In conformity with the current procedure and practice, a financial implication is a request for additional resources and it remains feasible that departures from the calendar could have programme implications, i.e., exceptions to existing rules or regulations, without budget implications, i.e., without involving the need for an additional appropriation.

8. Since the 1988-1989 biennium, a block provision has been made in the programme budget for the Department of Conference Services, which is reflective of an overall approach of incorporating perennial activities in the proposed programme budget rather than adding them during the General Assembly. With regard to section 32 of the programme budget, this practice is based on the assumption that General Assembly resolution 40/243 of 18 December 1985 would be complied with fully and that no more than five special conferences would be held in any given year. The level of financial provision in each case is based on the experience of previous years.

9. Under the procedure as described above, and in effect starting with the biennium 1990-1991, a distinction is thus made between absorbable costs involved in the implementation of an inter-sessional departure, and the budget implications, or the need for an additional appropriation.

II. COMPETENCE AND CURRENT PRACTICE OF THE COMMITTEE ON CONFERENCES WITH REGARD TO INTER-SESSIONAL DEPARTURES

10 With regard to inter-sessional departures having programme and/or budget implications, as noted in paragraphs 3-9 above, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 43/222 B, the Committee acts on behalf of the Assembly with respect to proposed departures that have administrative and financial implications in conformity with the budgetary process in force. The Committee, therefore, is mandated to consider the programme, i.e., the conference-servicing implications of proposals, including a review of the costs involved, bearing in mind that the budget implications must be considered by the Fifth Committee and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ).

11. The competence and practice of the Committee varies slightly for each type of change to the calendar that can occur.

A. Departures involving a change in date of an already scheduled session at the same venue

12. These changes generally involve the establishment of meeting dates for bodies included in the calendar of conferences as "to be determined". In accordance with past practice, the Secretariat has been entrusted by the Committee to deal with all departures that do not have financial or administrative implications and to inform the Committee of any action thereon. For the most part, the establishment of meeting dates does not give rise to programme implications.

B. Departures calling for a change in the venue of a scheduled session

13. Specific approval by the Committee is required if a proposed change of venue would constitute an exception to the headquarters principle, or would give rise to significant administrative difficulties for the Department of Conference Services.

14. The establishment of venues for bodies included in the calendar of conferences as "to be determined", the rescheduling at the established headquarters of bodies for which a Government has withdrawn an invitation for a session to be held within its territory and the acceptance of an offer from a Government to host a meeting are circumstances under which a meeting venue can change without representing an exception to the headquarters principle and

may not give rise to an administrative implication in the form of requiring any major change to the calendar. In these cases, the tenet as outlined above, i.e., that the Secretariat has been entrusted by the Committee to deal with all departures that do not have financial or administrative implications, and to inform the Committee of any action thereon would apply.

C. Departures involving supplementary requirements, such as an addition of meetings and sessions not scheduled, an extension of duration and/or number of meetings of sessions already scheduled and the increase in the level of services to be provided to meetings already scheduled

15. At its 101st meeting, in 1977, the Committee had before it requests for changes in servicing requirements, namely the provision of summary records to a body previously not entitled to written meeting records, and an additional entitlement in language services for the current and future sessions of a body beyond those as approved by the General Assembly.

16. At that time, the Secretariat transmitted to members of the Committee for its information a legal opinion from the Office of Legal Affairs of the Secretariat, wherein in both cases it concluded that the relevant paragraphs of the mandate of the Committee as established by the General Assembly in resolution 32/72 of 9 December 1977 dealt exclusively with advisory and consultative functions that the Committee was to exercise in relation to the Assembly itself and not to subsidiary organs. Further, when called upon "to act on behalf of the General Assembly in dealing with departures from the approved calendar of conferences that have administrative and financial implications", the "departures" in question involved matters such as proposed changes in date or venue of a session of a particular body and authority to provide additional language services on a permanent basis could not be inferred from such wording.

17. The legal opinion concluded that neither expressly nor implicitly did the terms of reference of the Committee allow it to decide whether a subsidiary body not specifically authorized by the General Assembly to have meeting records might, nevertheless, have such records and to provide additional language services on a permanent basis.

18. In addition, it was confirmed that the Secretary-General himself could provide services on an "as available" basis without referring the question to the Committee, but departures involving the permanent increase in the level of services to be provided to meetings already scheduled would require consideration and explicit authorization by the General Assembly itself.

19. The Office of Legal Affairs has recently confirmed that its earlier advice on the question of the competence of the Committee to authorize additional entitlements as regards inter-sessional departures continue to be applicable in the light of the new terms of reference of the Committee.

20. In accordance with the existing procedure, a request to extend a session beyond the dates as originally scheduled is directed to the secretariat of the Committee. The secretariat, in consultation with the Bureau of the Committee, is authorized to implement the request should it be possible to do so without any budget implication.

21. In order to consider a request for an inter-sessional departure, the Committee is informed of: (a) the reason and justification for the proposed change in the form of substantive reasons for the proposal, and legislative authority, if any; (b) the nature of the programme implication, i.e., an indication of any required exceptions to existing rules or regulations of the General Assembly, as well as specific information on each aspect of the proposed change; (c) the technical feasibility of accommodating the change as requested; and (d) the costs involved, including information on the potential for absorption within the initial appropriation.

22. With regard to cost estimates resulting from the proposed change, the Secretariat has consistently held the view that the full-costing method is that which is best suited for statements of programme budget implications at the initial stages of consideration and at the time of preparation of the calendar of conferences. However, in the case of inter-sessional departures, the calendar of conferences has already been established. The relevant consideration with respect to cost is therefore whether a change of date or venue will result in greater or lesser expenditure on the part of the Organization, regardless of the "full" cost implications. For that reason, the Secretariat, in presenting requests for inter-sessional departures to the Committee, informs the Committee of the incremental or actual cost implications. These are, of necessity, estimates, but the Secretariat endeavours to make them as precise as possible.

23. In order to determine the incremental cost, or the expected additional expenditure, the following applies. Subsistence and travel costs are calculated on the basis of an estimate of the availability of permanent staff at the time of the meeting, the number of temporary staff required and the associated salary. While it is possible to state with some precision the requirements for direct meeting services staff (that is, interpreters, precis-writers, verbatim reports, conference officers and documents officers) - they are either available at the time of the meeting or they are not - the total requirements at any one period for documentation services staff (translators, revisers and editorial clerks) - are somewhat more difficult to predict as it depends on the flow of material, not just that related to the body involved, but the total requirements. This depends in turn on several variables, including the date of submission of the material to the Department of Conference Services, the date by which it must be made available to intergovernmental bodies, and the length of the documents themselves, none of which the Department can forecast precisely. Nevertheless, estimates of the availability of both categories of permanent staff are made.

III. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

24. The Committee is authorized to act on behalf of the General Assembly, and the Economic and Social Council for requests arising when the Council itself is not in session, for inter-sessional departures that would not extend the existing entitlements on a permanent basis, or would result in the need for an additional appropriation beyond that as approved in the programme budget. In these cases, explicit action and approval is required by the Council and/or the Assembly.

25. The Committee may wish to consider adopting the following guidelines for consideration of and action on inter-sessional departures:

(a) The Secretariat would continue to deal with departures that do not have programme budget implications, i.e., those changes involving the establishment of meeting dates or venue for bodies included in the calendar of conferences as "to be determined", and to inform the Committee of any action thereon;

(b) For inter-sessional departures involving only programme implications:

(i) Requests for inter-sessional departures would be forwarded by the body concerned to the secretariat of the Committee, which would then consult with the Bureau. The request should contain the substantive reasons as well as any relevant legislative authority for the proposed change. In cases where the request was for an additional session, the reason or reasons why the organ concerned had not finished its work during the time allotted to it should also be included;

(ii) Should the Bureau concur with the proposal, the Chairman would authorize the secretariat to take the necessary action to implement the change, as requested, and a letter would be addressed to all members of the Committee informing them of the request received and the action taken;

(iii) Alternatively, should the Bureau not be in a position to authorize the proposal, the Chairman, or the secretariat at his request, would notify all members of the Committee by means of a memorandum;

(iv) The communication to the Committee should provide an assessment of the technical feasibility of accommodating the requested change; an indication of the nature of the programme implication, such as the required exception to existing rules or regulations of the Assembly, if any; and an estimate of incremental costs involved and potential for absorption;

(v) The memorandum that the Chairman or the secretariat would send to members informing them of the requested exception would contain a deadline for any comments they might wish to make. In the event

that approval was forthcoming, the secretariat would initiate the action necessary to implement the proposal as requested. Should any member of the Committee request a meeting on the proposal, that request would be brought to the attention of the Chairman and other members of the Bureau;

(c) For inter-sessional departures having programme implications in the form of the extension of entitlements on a permanent basis, and/or budget implications that would result in the need for any additional appropriation, in conformity with the mandate of the Committee, and the budgetary process in force, the Committee would continue to act in its advisory capacity.

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CALENDAR OF CONFERENCES AND MEETINGS: IMPROVED ORGANIZATION OF WORK AND EFFECTIVE USE OF CONFERENCE RESOURCES: MEASURES TO IMPROVE THE OVERALL EFFICIENCY AND EFFECTIVENESS OF THE USE OF CONFERENCE-SERVICING RESOURCES

Note by the Secretariat

INTRODUCTION

1. In paragraph 8 of resolution 45/238 A, the General Assembly called upon the Committee on Conferences to consider, within its mandate, further measures to improve the overall efficiency and effectiveness of the use of conference-servicing resources, bearing in mind the relevant recommendations in the report of the Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts to Review the Efficiency of the Administrative and Financial Functioning of the United Nations, 1/ as approved by resolution 41/213 of 19 December 1986, and to report to the General Assembly at its forty-sixth session.

2. At its 326th meeting, on 6 March 1991, the Committee requested the Secretariat to present a written report on the experiences gained from measures taken and results achieved to date as well as proposals for the Committee's review at its substantive session. The present report is submitted pursuant to that request and describes the improvements in efficiency and cost-effectiveness in the provision and utilization of conference services, including written meeting records, enacted by the General Assembly on the recommendations of the Committee over the last 16 years.

3. By its resolution 32/72 of 9 December 1977, the General Assembly broadened the mandate of the Committee on Conferences, a 22-member intergovernmental subsidiary organ of the Assembly. The Committee's principal task was the presentation to the General Assembly through the Fifth Committee

of a draft calendar of conferences and meetings for the coming year or biennium. The Committee was requested also, in accordance with its terms of reference, to recommend to the General Assembly means to provide the optimum apportionment of conference resources, facilities and services, including documentation, in order to ensure their most efficient and effective use.

4. In resolution 43/222 B of 21 December 1988, the General Assembly decided to retain the Committee as a permanent subsidiary organ, with broader and strengthened responsibilities, including:

> "... To plan and coordinate conferences and meetings in close consultation with the Secretariat and all relevant bodies in the preparation of the draft calendar, in particular by staggering conferences and meetings throughout the year, and to avoid to the maximum extent possible the overlapping of meetings related to the same section of activity in the same conference location;
>
> "... In this connection, to examine proposals of the Secretary-General on the draft calendar prepared on the basis of his budgetary proposals and to recommend to the General Assembly a draft calendar of conferences and meetings designed to meet the needs of the United Nations and to ensure the optimum utilization of conference-servicing resources ...
>
> "... To determine the ways and means that might ensure the optimum utilization of conference facilities and services, including documentation, and to present appropriate recommendations to the General Assembly;"

5. Thus, while the optimum utilization of resources can often lead to savings, it is the improvement of efficiency and cost-effectiveness, rather than the creation of savings as such, that the Committee is mandated to pursue.

6. The Committee has over the years recommended to the General Assembly a number of measures to promote the efficiency of the Secretariat with regard to the planning and servicing of meetings and conferences and the provision of documentation and written meeting records, as well as the efficiency with which intergovernmental bodies utilize the conference-servicing resources made available to them. Those recommendations are reflected in the following resolutions of the Assembly, adopted on the recommendation of the Committee: 31/140 of 17 December 1976; 32/71 of 9 December 1977; 33/55 of 14 December 1978; 34/50 of 23 November 1979; 35/10 of 3 November 1980; 36/117 of 10 December 1981; 37/14 of 16 November 1982; 38/32 of 25 November 1983; 39/68 of 13 December 1984; 40/243 of 18 December 1985; 41/177 of 17 December 1986; 42/207 of 11 December 1987; 43/222 of 21 December 1988; 44/196 of 21 December 1989; and 45/238 of 21 December 1990.

7. In those resolutions, the General Assembly adopted measures that govern the main aspects of conference-servicing work at the United Nations: the servicing of meetings, in the broadest sense of the word; the coordination of the meetings programme; and the provision of documentation, including

non-parliamentary documentation such as publications. The Committee's main initiatives, the results deriving from them, and proposed future areas of concentration in each of these areas are discussed below.

I. SERVICING OF MEETINGS

8. The most important single resolution governing the planning, location and conduct of meetings and conferences is General Assembly resolution 40/243, which itself is an omnibus resolution updating or reaffirming many earlier provisions, among them the two main principles of conference planning:

(a) That United Nations bodies shall normally plan to meet at their established headquarters;

(b) That bodies may meet away from their established headquarters when a Government issuing an invitation for a session to be held within its territory has agreed to defray the actual additional costs directly or indirectly involved.

9. The significance of those two principles was reflected as recommendation 4 of the Report of the Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts to Review the Efficiency of the Administrative and Financial Functioning of the United Nations, which states:

> "The existing principle that United Nations bodies should meet at their respective established headquarters, as provided for in General Assembly resolution 40/243 of 18 December 1985, should be strictly enforced. Whenever the Assembly accepts an invitation from the Government of a Member State to hold a conference or meeting away from established headquarters, the additional cost should be borne in full by that Government. The methods of budgeting these costs should be improved so as to ensure that all additional costs are accounted for." 1/

10. The establishment and maintenance of those two principles has greatly contributed to increased efficiency in planning and servicing meetings and conferences, and continued stringency in this regard, as well as to the guidelines recommended by the Committee and adopted by the General Assembly in resolution 32/71, section IV (see annex II to the present report) for reducing wastage resulting from meeting cancellations would improve the efficient use of conference-servicing resources.

11. At the same time, the Committee is mandated in paragraph 4 (c) of General Assembly resolution 43/222 B to act on behalf of the Assembly in dealing with departures from the approved calendar of conferences that have administrative and financial implications, in conformity with the budgetary process in force and with full respect for the mandates of other bodies. Thus, once the calendar has been approved at the end of each Assembly session, any proposals thereafter to change the dates or the venue of a meeting or conference in such a way as to give rise to administrative or financial implications has to be approved by the Committee on the basis of detailed substantive arguments in

favour of the proposed change. In general, this has led to a decline in such proposed intersessional departures, and a consequent reduction in the disruption that inevitably accompanies the holding of meetings away from the established headquarters of the substantive units responsible for them, as well as concomitant savings.

12. The Committee has also recommended to the General Assembly ways of improving the preparations for special conferences of the United Nations (see resolutions 35/10 C, 37/14 B and 41/177 C). The implementation of those measures has led to an increase in the efficiency with which such conferences are planned and serviced.

13. Since the thirty-fifth session of the General Assembly (see resolutions 35/10 A, para. 5, 36/117 A, sect. I, para. 5, 38/32 D, paras. 1-5, 39/68 B, 40/243, sect. II, paras. 1-3, 41/177 C, para. 2, 42/207 B, para. 3, 43/222 A, paras. 4-7, 44/196 A, paras. 3-7, and 45/238 A, paras. 5-11), the Committee has been engaged in a continuing effort to secure a more efficient utilization of conference time on the part of subsidiary organs of the Assembly. In doing so, it has studied statistics showing the extent to which organs have cancelled scheduled meetings or otherwise failed to make full use of the interpretation services allocated to them. In the most recent resolution on the pattern of conferences, the Assembly mandated the Chairman of the Committee and the Secretary-General to maintain contacts with all United Nations organs in order to ensure the most efficient and effective use of conference services allocated to those organs. Letters were addressed to officers of all subsidiary bodies, including those whose utilization was less than the 75 per cent benchmark figure set by the Committee, suggesting ways in which they could improve utilization figures.

14. In the past, correspondence with the presiding officers of subsidiary bodies has resulted in the overall improvement in the utilization of conference-servicing resources over the years, and to the identification of certain factors that can lead to lower utilization rates, such as time spent in informal consultations before the start or after the end of regularly scheduled meetings.

15. Since the forty-fourth session of the General Assembly (see resolutions 44/196 A, para. 4, and 45/238 A, para. 11) the Committee has undertaken a review of the methodology employed in the calculation of the utilization factor in order to provide a more accurate assessment of the overall use of conference resources with a view to enabling United Nations bodies to make the optimum use of conference services and to facilitate, where necessary, continued rationalization of their meeting requirements, and to ensure that all factors that might influence the rate of cancellations of meetings, such as availability of documentation and meetings services, are fully incorporated into the statistical information. It is suggested that further compilation of data, modifications in methodology, and analysis of emerging patterns would assist in improving the utilization of conference-servicing resources provided to intergovernmental organs.

16. One important measure that has led both to greater Secretariat efficiency and to savings has consistently been supported by the Committee, most lately in its recommendation to the General Assembly of a measure subsequently adopted as paragraph 9 of resolution 40/243. By that paragraph, the Assembly authorized the Secretary-General to apply maximum overprogramming of meetings whenever possible to achieve better utilization of conference services.

17. The importance of overprogramming can be explained as follows. Since the permanent interpretation staff at Headquarters can service an average of 60 meetings a week, temporary assistance staff - freelance interpreters - have to be recruited if more than 60 meetings are expected to take place in a given future week. Thus, with the support of the Committee, the Secretariat, on the basis of past experience, assesses the number of meetings likely to take place in every week of the year. If the likely number of meetings can be serviced from within existing permanent staff resources, no recruitment takes place, even though the number of meetings actually scheduled to take place appears to be more than the Secretariat's capacity to service them. Overprogramming, in other words, is the practice of recruiting temporary assistance not in accordance with the number of meetings scheduled to take place, but in accordance with the Secretariat's estimate of how many meetings will actually take place.

18. Two further measures designed to increase efficiency relate to the Committee's activities during the General Assembly session. By paragraph 34 of decision 34/401, since updated by section I, paragraph 7, of resolution 40/243, no subsidiary organ of the Assembly is permitted to meet at Headquarters during regular sessions of the Assembly. In accordance with established practice, any subsidiary organ wishing to hold meetings at that time has to apply for authorization to the Committee, which then makes a recommendation to the President of the Assembly. With the introduction by the Committee of increasingly tighter procedures for dealing with such applications, the number of exceptions granted by the Assembly fell by approximately half between 1985 and 1986 when the procedures involved were formalized. In addition, a number of subsidiary bodies have reorganized their work programme in order to obviate the need to meet at Headquarters during regular sessions of the Assembly.

19. By paragraph 6 of resolution 35/10 A, the Committee is authorized to review proposals made during sessions of the General Assembly that have administrative, i.e., conference-servicing, implications. The Committee has held a number of meetings in accordance with this provision and has often advised the Assembly, through the Fifth Committee, on proposed meetings or conferences and on the existing legislation on conference servicing.

II. CONTROL AND LIMITATION OF DOCUMENTATION

20. Over the years, the Committee on Conferences has considered a number of aspects of this question, namely, the late issuance of documents, the content and length of and entitlements to written meeting records, and the length, format and content of reports of subsidiary organs of the General Assembly.

The action taken and the results of the Committee's initiatives can be summed up as set out below.

A. Late issuance of documents

21. On the basis of a Secretariat report (A/AC.172/98), the Committee recommended to the General Assembly measures adopted in Assembly resolution 39/68 D, paragraphs 3 and 4. This requires all Secretariat units responsible for drafting documents to ensure that their manuscripts are delivered to the Department of Conference Services in accordance with the prescribed timetable for their submission, and requests the Secretariat to circulate, eight weeks before the opening of a session of an organ, a report on the state of preparation at that time of all required documents, and to include in that report an explanation for any delays, identifying the Secretariat unit responsible for that delay.

22. In 1990, the Committee considered a Secretariat report (A/AC.172/141) on the implementation of all rules and regulations on the control and limitation of documentation. Various proposals recommended by the Committee were adopted by the Assembly in the most recent resolution on the pattern of conferences (45/238 B). Therein, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to take all appropriate measures to ensure that pre-session documents for meetings were distributed not less than six weeks before the meetings, simultaneously in all official languages of the organs of the United Nations, and reiterated its request to circulate a report on the state of preparation of all documents required for the session. The Department of Conference Services is currently involved in the organization of an interdepartmental group that would tackle the question of late issuance of documents on a Secretariat-wide basis.

23. On the recommendation of the Committee, the General Assembly appealed to Member States to respond in a timely manner to requests for information for inclusion in documents. This appeal was renewed and expanded to include organizations of the United Nations system in resolution 45/238 B.

B. Written meeting records

24. In its resolution 45/238 B, the General Assembly decided that pending a further decision of the Assembly on the recommendations of the Committee, no subsidiary organ of the Assembly should be entitled to summary records, with six exceptions. The Committee will continue to review the question of the provision of summary records on a regular basis with a view to reporting to the Assembly. The Assembly also requested Member States to exercise restraint in their requests for the circulation of communications as United Nations documents and to keep their submissions as brief as possible.

C. Reports of subsidiary organs

25. In paragraph 14 of resolution 37/14 C, the General Assembly reaffirmed a desirable limit of 32 pages for reports of subsidiary organs of the General Assembly, i.e., supplements to the official records of the Assembly. Many of these supplements - the reports of the Secretary-General and the Security Council, the proposed programme budget and so on, are not reports of subsidiary organs and therefore are not governed by this provision. In monitoring the implementation of the 32-page limit, however, the Committee had initially found that, overall, the number of pages of reports had been reduced since the adoption of this measure. However, recently, and as reported to the Committee in 1990 (A/AC.172/139), an upward turn in the number of subsidiary bodies whose reports exceeded the 32 page-limit was noted by the Committee. On the recommendation of the Committee, the Assembly, in resolution 45/238 B, requested the secretariats of subsidiary organs to bring the relevant recommendations of the Assembly to the attention of subsidiary organs at the start of substantive sessions. The Secretariat will be monitoring the implementation of these recommendations with a view to reporting to the Committee.

III. PUBLICATIONS

26. The Committee has also made recommendations to the General Assembly on the Organization's practices and policies with regard to non-parliamentary documentation, i.e., publications. At its 1982 session, the Committee discussed in general terms the possibility of effecting economies by identifying for discontinuance recurrent publications that had lost their usefulness, become redundant, or whose value did not measure up to the cost of their production. On the recommendation of the Committee, the Assembly adopted resolution 38/32 E, in which it requested its subsidiary organs, and invited the Economic and Social Council to request its subsidiary organs, to undertake a review of the recurrent publications they had authorized, and suggested that the Committee for Programme and Coordination review recurrent publications in the context of the medium-term plan or the programme budget.

27. At its 1989 session, the Committee on Conferences considered a report on the results of the reviews undertaken which had indicated that although the objective had been, inter alia, to effect economies via the identification of titles for discontinuance, the reviews had resulted in a net addition of 22 publications to the programme. In 1990, the Committee continued and expanded its review of the publications policies, to include, inter alia, the Secretariat's efforts and practices in printing and a methodology for establishing the costs of processing publication. The Committee's recommendation that intergovernmental organs exercise restraint in their authorization of recurrent publications was subsequently adopted by the Assembly in paragraph 8 of resolution 45/238 B. It is anticipated that the Committee will remain seized of this matter on the basis of subsequent reports from the Secretariat on the full spectrum of activities for the preparation, processing and dissemination of publications.

IV. COORDINATION OF SERVICING

28. By paragraph 4 (f) of resolution 43/222 B, the Committee is mandated to make recommendations as appropriate to the General Assembly on means to ensure an improved coordination of conferences with the United Nations and to conduct the appropriate consultations in that regard. At its 300th meeting, on 24 August 1989, the Committee began an examination of how best to address this item and requested the Secretariat to examine the current status of coordination, identifying any difficulties or problems and suggesting possible solutions with a view to making the necessary improvements.

29. At the Committee's request, the Chairman addressed a letter to the Chairman of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) in order to avail itself of the opportunity to benefit from that Committee's views. Subsequently the Organizational Committee of ACC decided to refer the matter to the Inter-Agency Meeting for Language Arrangements, Documentation and Publications (IAMLADP), where it was decided that the agencies would transmit to the IAMLADP secretariat an analysis of their 1988-1989 programmes of meetings, which would include an assessment of difficulties encountered and suggestions on possible actions to improve coordination. The information received to date will serve as the basis for a paper to be considered at the 1991 session of IAMLADP, which is scheduled to meet in September 1991, and of the interim paper currently before the Committee on Conferences (see A/AC.172/1991/CRP.8).

30. It is suggested that the Committee consider the matter in further detail following the discussions to be undertaken by IAMLADP with a view to making recommendations as appropriate to the General Assembly.

Notes

1/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-first Session, Supplement No. 49 (A/41/49).

Annex I

SUMMARY OF MAJOR MEASURES RECOMMENDED BY THE COMMITTEE AND THEIR RESULTS

1.	Espousal of established headquarters principle and host-government principle	Reduction in cost and disruption involved in holding meetings away from established headquarters
2.	Establishment of guidelines to reduce wastage resulting from meetings cancellations	Improved utilization of conference-servicing resources
3.	Scrutiny of proposed intersessional departures	Overall decline in the number of requests for departures
4.	Establishment of procedures designed to improve the planning and servicing of special conferences	Improved planning and servicing of special conferences
5.	Consideration of statistics showing cancellations, etc., of General Assembly subsidiary organs	Some improvement in the overall utilization of conference resources
6.	Institution, application and development of overprogramming	Savings in temporary-assistance recruitment
7.	Implementation of General Assembly resolution 35/10 A, paragraph 6	More effective scrutiny of proposals that contravene existing General Assembly conference-servicing rules
8.	Implementation of the principle of no subsidiary organ meeting during a regular session of the General Assembly	Easier planning of meetings-servicing during the General Assembly
9.	Recommendation to the General Assembly on the six-week rule	Identification of Secretariat units responsible for delay; easier planning of documentation processing requirements
10.	Reduction in the number of bodies entitled to summary records	Some savings in translation and typing time
11.	Establishment of the 32-page limit for reports of subsidiary organs	Some savings in documentation processing time

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12.	Tightened requirements for planning missions	Stricter control over mission expenditure
13.	Reduced number of bodies entitled to written meeting records	Could lead to reductions in expenditure and the faster production of documents and records

Annex II

GUIDELINES FOR REDUCING THE WASTAGE RESULTING FROM CANCELLATION OF SCHEDULED MEETINGS

Guideline 1: The substantive secretariat of each body should circulate to the members before the first meeting of each session a draft agenda and timetable for the completion of consideration of items, taking into account the availability of documentation.

Guideline 2: The programme for each meeting should include more than one agenda item so that, if consideration of an item is interrupted or completed, the members may pass on to another item.

Guideline 3: In order that delegations may initiate substantive discussion at the first meeting, after the organization of work, committee secretaries should consult with delegations before the opening of the session to ascertain whether some representatives would be prepared to speak on the first substantive item at the opening meeting. As is the practice of the General Assembly, a list of speakers should be compiled several days in advance of the debate on each item. It would in general be advisable to convene meetings only when there are a sufficient number of speakers to ensure adequate utilization of available resources.

Guideline 4: The secretariat of each body should make sure that documentation is made available to all members sufficiently in advance of the session to permit proper study of it and, in consultation with the chairman, should schedule meetings only when the documentation has been available for an adequate period.

Guideline 5: In planning the requirements for a given session, allowance should be made for at least one day towards the end of the session without meetings so that draft reports, resolutions and decisions can be prepared without interfering with the committee's business.

Guideline 6: Committee secretaries should identify any possible overlapping in the membership of their committees with that of certain others, particularly those in the same field of activity, with a view to reducing the likelihood of conflicting meeting schedules; the Committee on Conferences, in its own examination of the proposed calendars, should also pay particular attention to this point.

Guideline 7: The secretary of each body should bring to the attention of members, as appropriate, any resolutions and decisions on the regulation of meetings and conferences, including directives on the allocation and utilization of conference resources.

Guideline 8: The secretary of each body should inform the members, at the beginning of each session of the conference resources, including the number of meetings and the extent of interpretation services, made available to the body and should give them a brief account, at appropriate intervals during the session, of the use they have been making of those resources.

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Substantive session
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Agenda item 2 (b)

CALENDAR OF CONFERENCES AND MEETINGS: IMPROVED UTILIZATION OF CONFERENCE-SERVICING RESOURCES: MEETING STATISTICS OF UNITED NATIONS ORGANS

Note by the Secretariat

Introduction

1. In paragraph 4 of resolution 44/196 A of 21 December 1989, the General Assembly requested the Committee on Conferences to review the methodology on conference-servicing utilization rates in order to provide, if possible, a more accurate assessment of the overall use of conference resources with a view to enabling United Nations bodies to make the optimum use of conference services and to facilitate, where necessary, continued rationalization of their meeting requirements.

2. At its substantive session in 1990, the Committee considered the most recent report by the Secretariat on meetings statistics, which included an expanded section on the methodology employed in compiling the statistical information included therein (A/AC.172/88/Add.8). The Committee agreed to put into experimental use a newly proposed methodology to run parallel with the existing methodology for the next three years. Subsequently, at the organizational meeting for 1991, the Committee requested the Secretariat to present a conference room paper containing the statistics of a representational sample of bodies using the newly adopted methodology. The present paper is provided pursuant to that request.

Methodology

3. The annex to the present document contains a listing of the bodies used in this sample, and includes bodies meeting in New York, Geneva and Vienna.

The annex provides the number of meetings planned by a given organ in a scheduled session, not including any additional meetings (column A); the number of additional meetings held during that session (column B); the number of cancelled meetings during the session (column C); the number of meetings actually held (columnn D); the number of unrelated reassignments (column E); and the amount of time lost owing to late starting or early ending (column F). Following this statistical data are three indicators: meeting ratio (MR); planning accuracy factor (PAF); and utilization factor (UF).

4. MR is calculated as meetings held as a percentage of meetings available to a given body (D as a percentage of A). PAF is calculated as meetings planned, minus additional meetings, minus cancellations, all as a percentage of meetings planned (A minus B minus C as a percentage of A). UF is calculated in accordance with the existing methodology and presented annually to the Committee in the A/AC.172/88 addenda series of documents.

5. The two additional elements included in the revised methodology, meeting ratio and planning accuracy factor, represent an attempt to quantify the accuracy with which committees predict the number of fully serviced meetings they will require during regularly scheduled sessions. The statistical information presented therefore assesses the overall use of conference services assigned to a given body via the utilization factor, and also provides further insight into the meeting pattern of that body.

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Name of subsidiary body and dates of session	A	B	C	D	E	F	MR	PAF	UF
Committee for Programme and Coordination 7 May-2 June	48	20	2	66	1	44.10	137	54	76
Disarmament Commission 7-29 May	62	-	-	62	-	33.00	100	100	73
Committee on Contributions 11-29 June	21	-	3	18	-	9.25	85	85	77
Special Committee on the Charter of the United Nations and on the Strengthening of the Role of the Organization 12 February-2 March	28	-	7	21	5	12.50	75	75	70
Preparatory Committee for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development 5-16 March	20	4	8	16	7	13.45	80	40	75
International Civil Service Commission 5-23 March	30	2	5	27	3	16.25	90	76	78
Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights 15 January-4 February	30	-	4	26	-	2.25	86	86	83
United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, Trade and Development Board 11-22 March	80	-	30	50	-	58.25	60	60	38
Commission on the Status of Women 26 February-9 March	20	-	-	20	-	15.00	100	100	75
Committee on Crime Prevention and Control 5-16 February	20	-	1	19	-	5.40	95	95	85
Commission on Narcotic Drugs 29 January-2 February	10	-	-	10	-	5.55	100	100	80